

## Pittsfield State Forest logging plan would combat invasive emerald ash borer

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PITTSFIELD - For the first time in nearly 20 years, the northern section of Pittsfield State Forest could be harvested for valuable lumber and help prevent the spread of the tree-destroying emerald ash borer.

The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation plans to conduct several timber lot sales over the next five years within a 420-acre area in the towns of Lanesborough and Hancock. Once the snow melts, DCR Bureau of Forestry will take inventory of the maple, oak, white pine, beech, ash and other hardwood that make up the woodlands.

Prior to bidding out the potential lumber and firewood DCR foresters will conduct a public, pre-harvest tour in the fall explaining the harvesting process in the area split by Potter Mountain Road, last logged in 1994, according to forester Conrad "Connie" Ohman.

"There's a lot of ash on the site, one reason we picked that area," he said. "The recommendation is to reduce the amount of ash to 10 percent of the forest to reduce the spread of the ash borer."

Ohman's remarks came during a sparsely attended public meeting Monday night in Pittsfield, one of several being held across the commonwealth regarding the next round of proposed timber sales at a total of four state forests.

Written remarks on logging proposals can be made online at [timber.comments@state.ma.us](mailto:timber.comments@state.ma.us). Following the public input, DCR will decide whether to sell the timber, and bidding could begin this fall.

DCR foresters say the emerald ash borer has started to infest the ash in Pittsfield State Forest and should be commercially harvested before it's devastated by the invasive insect.

The emerald ash borer's presence in Massachusetts was initially discovered in August 2012, when the flying insect turned up in a trap along Kirchner Road in Dalton. In the more than two years, the bad bug has been detected in numerous areas in Central Berkshire

Since the ash borer poses a particular threat to forests in Berkshire County, which contains 64 percent of the 45 million ash trees in the state, DCR quarantined Berkshire wood as of March 1, 2013, in an effort to limit the spread of the bad bugs. The invasive beetles can kill a tree in a matter of a few years.

State foresters added that beech trees are also high on the logging list in Pittsfield as that species is susceptible to a bark disease that is genetically transmitted to beech saplings.

If put out to bid, the Potter Mountain Road proposal would be the fifth in Berkshire County, since logging of state forests resumed two years ago across Massachusetts.

From 2009 to 2011, DCR halted timber lot sales in order to review the agency's logging practices and determine how best to harvest state woodlands, while maintaining a diversity of trees in each forest.

For decades, logging state forests involved targeting a single type of tree, all with a 20 year range, state foresters said.

Following a 2012 report, DCR began using uneven management techniques, harvesting a variety of trees ranging between zero and 120 years old.

"We will manage for multiple age classes –at least three age classes – to promote a diverse forest," said Bill Hill, supervisor of DCR's Bureau of Forestry.

When logging state forests restarted in 2013, the DCR sold two timber lots each in Sandisfield State Forest and October Mountain State Forest in Washington.

The Sandisfield sales brought in, combined, more than \$210,000; October Mountain \$259,000, according Kris Massini, management forester for DCR's Region 1 that covers the Berkshires.

"The price involves two things, the cash value of [wood] and value of in-kind services such as restoration of certain plants, trail work and other infrastructure improvements," he said.

DCR officials noted the Pittsfield State Forest logging plan could include upgrades to the snowmobile or ATV trails in the Potter Mountain Road area.